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Canford Magna Parish Church



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# **5 July 2020 1 Nicodemus encounters Jesus**

# **John 3:1-17**

**Preparation**

Read John chapter 3 verses 1-17 through quickly. What are the key words that jump out at you? Read it through again slowly. If you can, highlight the key words you’d like to ponder, pray about, and talk about with your Life Group (if you are in one – if not, why not talk to a friend and do a ‘Bible Study’ together?)

Listen to the sermons (either Breakfast@9, Jenny Triplow; or ‘Church’, Geoff Boland; or both). Has this stirred any other words or thoughts you hadn’t seen in your private reading.

Read chapter 1 of Tim Keller’s book ‘Encounters with Jesus’ if you have the book.

**Discussion**

1. Discuss the key words from the passage that jumped out for you.
2. Why did Nicodemus come at night? (v2)
3. What does being ‘born again’ mean to you? (v3). Would you describe yourself as such?
4. Where else do you see the expression ‘the kingdom of God’ in John’s gospel? What does that expression mean to you?
5. Why is Nicodemus so confused by Jesus’ explanation of being ‘born again’? (vv5-8, and 10-17).
6. What does the expression ‘conversion’ mean to you? How does this differ to being ‘born again’?
7. What must we ‘do’ to be ‘born again’?
8. What is the relevance of verse 14 about Moses lifting up the snake in the desert?

**Witness**

Nicodemus was an ‘insider’ when it came to religious observance in Israel. We would probably describe ourselves as ‘insiders’ to our Christian faith. How can we help bring people into the ‘kingdom of God’ and be ‘born again’?

# **12 July 2020 2. A Samaritan Woman encounters Jesus**

# **John 4:1-26**

**Preparation**

Read John chapter 4 verses 1-26 through quickly. What are the key words that jump out at you? Read it through again slowly. If you can, highlight the key words you’d like to ponder, pray about, and talk about with your Life Group (if you are in one – if not, why not talk to a friend and do a ‘Bible Study’ together?)

Listen to the sermons (either Breakfast@9, Sandra Webster or ‘Church’, Chris; or both). Has this stirred any other words or thoughts you hadn’t seen in your private reading.

Read chapter 2 of Tim Keller’s book ‘Encounters with Jesus’ if you have the book.

**Discussion**

1. Discuss the key words from the passage that jumped out for you.
2. Contrast the character of the Samaritan Woman and Nicodemus. What do they have

in common?

1. Have there been times when you have felt strangely empty even though in worldly

terms all or most of your needs have been satisfied? Share an example.

1. Reflect on when racial, cultural, disability, gender or moral divides have made you

feel isolated or separated from other people. How did that made you feel? (v9)

1. Share a time when you’ve felt full of ‘Living water’, the Holy Spirit. What has that

inspired you to do? (v 10-15)

1. Why does the woman introduce the topic of worship in v19? What does it mean to

you to worship ‘in spirit and truth’.

1. What is the significance of Jesus’ statement in v26?

**Witness**

In his sermon, Chris quotes Archbishop William Temple who says:

*“It [the good news] must always be shared. Its very nature involves that, for it is Himself, His own Spirit, the Spirit of Love. To receive that does not mean to enjoy the knowledge that God loves us. It means that His active love is present in our hearts, and if so, it must go out to others. If we are not sharing with others the gift of God, that is proof that we have not received it.”*

What do those words inspire in you to do?

# **19 July 2020 3. Sceptical Nathanael encounters Jesus**

# **John 1:43-51**

**Preparation**

Read the whole of chapter 1 of John’s gospel. Notice the change in genre and narrative, from the Prologue (vv 1-19) to the testimony of John the Baptist (vv 19- 34) through to the recruitment of Jesus’ first disciples (vv 35-51). What message is the evangelist John trying to convey to his reader?

Listen to the talks (either Breakfast@9, Alison Orman; or, ‘Church’, Chris; or both). What new thoughts do these speakers inspire in you, after your reading of the first Chapter?

Read chapter 1 of Tim Keller’s book ‘Encounters with Jesus’, if you have the book. How has this influenced your reflections so far?

**Discussion**

1. Go round the group and share your reflections from the Preparation. For you, what is the ‘big idea’ of this passage?
2. Who are the ‘sceptics’ today? Are you one? Have you become jaded with your faith, or disappointed? What should we do about it?
3. Where do you see prejudice and discrimination around you? What is your ‘Nazareth’ today? Has the ‘Black Lives Matter’ campaign inspired by the death of George Floyd touched you?
4. Do you think it was a ‘Damascus Road’ experience for Nathanael in verses 48-49, or do you think there were other words John has omitted for brevity? (bearing in mind the closing words of 21:24-25)
5. Contrast the story of ‘Jacob’s ladder’ in Genesis 28:10-22 with Jesus’ words in John 1:50-51, and in the context of John’s vision from Jesus in Revelation 21. What is the defining difference between this foundational Old Testament story and the New Testament promises?

**Witness**

As a committed follower of Christ, are there things that you still struggle with, that you are sceptical about, or need to let go of (unforgiveness, resentment towards the church, or minister, or another parishioner?

Book a time with a trusted friend or prayer partner, and talk openly about it. Be accountable - ask for prayer and check in each week over the next month to see whether you are dealing with it in a holy, wholesome way.

# **26 July 2020 4. Martha and Mary encounter Jesus**

# **John 11**

**Preparation**

Read John chapter 11.

If you have the book, read Chapter 3 ‘The Grieving Sisters’ in Tim Keller’s book *Encounters with Jesus.*

**Discussion**

What comments "struck" you in John chapter 11? Did you connect to anything in the passage or in the sermon?

Three key words were:
(a) expectation (waiting for, looking for, anticipation of..)
(b) identification
(c) resurrection.

a) In John 11 what were the different expectations of the characters of (i) one another (ii) Jesus (iii) Jesus' expectations. Do you have expectations in relation to this passage, or to the issues and circumstances in the sermon?

b) Where can you identify with any of the characters in this passage, with Jesus, with any circumstance or question in the sermon? Do you feel Jesus has at any point identified with you or your circumstances at any point in your life? If so how did you feel and has there been any lasting fruit from it?

c)Resurrection.
Martha said she knew there was a resurrection at the last day. What is your understanding of this? Do you think this is it? or is there more? Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life". How much can you identify with this statement? and for you is all a future hope? Do you have any experiences relating to this?

**Response**

What are your hopes in/of Jesus for you in: (i) your present circumstances (ii) the situation the church finds itself in (iii) the international scene. What expectations do you have for yourself / the Church / Canford/ the world/Creation.

Does this passage have any contribution to make? What role can you/Canford/the Church play to bring about dynamic and lasting fruit for the glory of God. Jesus said in verse 4 "For the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

# **2 August 2020 5. The Wedding Party**

# **John 2**

**Preparation**

Read John 2:1-11. Consider that this is the first of the seven miracles or signs that Jesus performs in John’s gospel. What significance do you take from this story?

Listen to the Sunday talk (Church only, no Breakfast@9 service this week). What new ideas or significance can you take from this, into your own life?

If you have it, read chapter 4 of Timothy Keller’s book, *Encounters with Jesus* (The Wedding Party). How do his thoughts change your reading of this passage?

**Discussion**

1. Jesus speaks in many tones throughout the gospels, as we saw last week with how he comforted Mary and Martha. What do you take from how he spoke to Mary here? (John 2:4)
2. Both Mary and the servants obeyed Jesus without question. What made them so assured? Do you have that same assurance to follow? (John 2:5,7)
3. When the master of the banquet declared it choice wine, the servants knew what Jesus had done. How do you think they felt in this moment? How do you feel when you feel a gift bestowed on you? (John 2:9-10)
4. The families would have felt considerable shame had the wine run out. Have there been times in your life where you felt ashamed of a mistake, and someone helped you out? Was the gratitude you felt long lasting, and how can that gratitude shape how we worship?

**Reflection**

Jesus came to be a substitutional sacrifice for all shame, guilt and wrongdoing. Are you feeling ashamed or hesitant about anything, that you can let go of over the coming week, by laying it at the foot of the cross? Perhaps speak it out to make the first step to moving past it. Rejoice that we can all let go of past hurts and regrets because of what Jesus did for us on the cross by playing this video <https://youtu.be/u-1fwZtKJSM>

**Witness**

Keller draws a link between this wedding party and the one at the end of history. How can we best describe the joy that party will bring to all believers, in a way that will resonate with those yet to walk the path?